

Solemn Novena to St. Ann

100th Anniversary

July 20, 2024

Preaching of Rev. Luis Daniel Guivas Gerena, C.P.

Who am I? Well, for starters, I'm a 39-year-old man born in a small town in Puerto Rico called Lares. I'm the oldest of four siblings, the son of Euclides and Olga.

I studied business administration, philosophy, and theology. I have many friends and a wonderful family. My father is a farmer. My mother passed away when I was four and a half years old. At the age of 27, I went on a mission trip to Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic. And when I came back, I decided that I needed to discern my vocation and rethink my future, which at that point I thought I had already planned. A year later, I joined the Congregation of the Passion and began my formation process, looking forward to becoming a priest to serve God's people, especially in the crucified of today.

In 2014, I began my novitiate, and a year later I professed my vows as a Passionist. In December of 2021, I was ordained a deacon, and in January of 2023, I was ordained a priest for the Church, and here I am today, enjoying my time in Scranton and preaching to you this novena together with Father Nelson. I'm quiet, I'm an introverted person, but I enjoy very much being with people.

I'm sometimes insecure, I'm a sinner, but I am also a child of God, trying to become a better person each day. I'm a human being with my own flaws and virtues, with my talents and my limitations, and of course there is much more that I could say about myself, but I think I've said enough. And yet, the question still remains, Who am I? You see, this is a philosophical question, but it's also a question that we all have to answer for ourselves.

Who am I? The truth is that the answer is, or should be, in constant evolution, constantly changing and developing until the day we pass away into God's eternity. It's also very related to our faith, because who we are is a gift from God. Every little detail of our being is an expression of who God has made us to be.

Therefore, it is important for us to ask ourselves, no matter our age, who am I? We each have our own personality, we each have our own story, and we share in the same mystery of life. In today's Gospel, we read and heard the Cantic of Mary, also known as the Magnificat, and this is one of the most beautiful scripture passages that we can find in the Bible. It expresses Mary's gratitude to God for all the wonders that God had done for her, for all the wonders that God was doing in her life at that moment, and for all the wonders that God would do for her from then on for all generations to come.

What a beautiful and poetic way of expressing her gratitude to God, while at the same time acknowledging her self-awareness of who she was. We see, for example, that she acknowledges her lowliness, her self-awareness of who she was when she says, he has

looked upon his handmaid's lowliness. She knows who she is, and she embraces it all as a gift from God.

She does not boast on being the chosen one to bear the Son of God in her womb. Rather, she acknowledges that she is undeserving of such a gift, but she embraces it with gratitude. Her praise to God comes from deep within her soul as evidence of how she felt after being chosen to be the mother of our Savior.

Mary, in her gratitude, despite the difficulties that represented the fact that she was a young woman who was having a baby before being married to Joseph, recognizes God's presence in her life and in the life of so many others around her and after her. She recognizes herself as an instrument of God. Through her, we too experience the joy of receiving God's favors and blessings.

Now, something very important that we must keep in mind is that Mary's gratitude and joy are a response from her faith. Like Hannah, the mother of the prophet Samuel, Mary sees God's promises being fulfilled. They both experience God's presence in them, through them, and among them in very concrete ways.

God is not just a distant God. God is there with them in the ordinary of their lives. And in her response, Mary exalts in God and praises Him. But that's not all. She also responds with concrete actions, going to her cousin and sharing her joy with her. She does not stay home praising God for His goodness. She goes out to serve Elizabeth who was also pregnant in her old age. Mary's gratitude is not self-centered. It is life-giving and active. It moves her to serve in very concrete and practical ways, not just in words. It comes from her faith and trust in God. It expresses her joy and gratitude to God.

In this same way, we too are called today to share in Mary's gratitude to God. We too are called to praise God for His loving presence among us and share our joy with the rest of the world with concrete actions of love and service. It doesn't have to be something beyond our capacities. God only asks of us that which we can give. God knows who we are and where we're at in life. And He gives us a part in the building of His kingdom.

Every small action is or can be an act of praise to God. Whether it is a helping hand, a small piece of advice, a smile, or anything else bigger or smaller than this, as long as it comes from our heart as an act of praise to God. So, as we go about our day today, let us be mindful of who we are. Let us acknowledge our lowliness like Mary did. Let us thank God for His many blessings in our life and praise God with words and with deeds. Let us, following Mary's example, look back and thank God. Look forward and trust God. Look above and praise God. Look around and serve God. And look within us and find God. Let us thank God for being the person that He has chosen us to be. For being the person that He has made us to be.

And let us praise God with our words, with our minds, with our thoughts, and with every action of our being.